

05/11/21 Tuesday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

The Blame Game - Political Cartoon

Over the last several days, hundreds of rockets have been deployed along the Gaza Strip as Israel's Iron Dome defense system has been repeatedly tapped to intercept incoming missiles. The clashes have led to dozens of fatalities and injuries.

Former US President Donald Trump weighed in on the latest spat between Israeli and Palestinian officials on Tuesday, claiming that the Biden administration was partly to blame for the renewed tensions.

A [statement](#) issued from Trump's post-presidency office claims that the Trump administration was "known as the Peace Presidency," explaining that calmer heads appeared to prevail during his time in office because "Israel's adversaries knew that ... there would be swift retribution if Israel was attacked."

"Under [US President Joe] Biden, the world is getting more violent and more unstable because Biden's weakness and lack of support for Israel is leading to new attacks on our allies," reads the statement.

Trump's release also blasted Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), who recently [accused](#) Israel of terrorism over the recent clashes along the Gaza Strip.

Over the last several days, multiple rockets have been launched by Hamas, with retaliation by the Israel Defense Forces. Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [vowed](#) that Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups would pay a "heavy price" for the strikes.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Broadway Shows 'The Lion King,' 'Wicked' & 'Hamilton' to Reopen After Pandemic Closures by [MariTi Blaise Lovell](#)

New York's Broadway theater district went into lockdown on March 12, 2020, a day after the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic. Broadway represents a core identity of New York City in a way that is easily accessible.

Broadway officials announced Tuesday on ABC's "Good Morning America" that shows "Hamilton," "Wicked" and "The Lion King" will be the first three plays to operate at full capacity by September 14.

During the [interview](#), Broadway stars from each musical discussed in detail what opening up would mean for not only the economy of New York, but for the theater community as well.

L. Steven Taylor, who has played the role of King Mufasa in Broadway's "The Lion King" since 1997, spoke about the initiatives being taken to continue the theater's work in bringing New York's diverse community together.

Taylor mentioned collaborations being done between [Disney Theatrical](#), the [Broadway Advocacy Coalition](#), [Black Theater United](#) and [Black Theater Coalition](#) to ensure equity in the arts.

After the events surrounding the death of Minnesota man George Floyd, social and racial justice has been an ongoing battle for New York. Krystal Joy Brown, who plays Eliza Schuyler in Broadway's "Hamilton," helped to create the Hamilton Racial Justice Task earlier [this year](#), and announced more plans for Broadway to contribute back to the community.

"We've taken a lot of steps not only to make sure the theater will be safe for our audience members, but cast and crew have been trained in anti-racism training, also making sure that we as a brand are pushing forward social justice," Brown explained.

"We realize that as a company - we can come together and do some amazing work so we created something called 'Plan for Progress' - to continue to show equity and inclusivity in our community."

The actors feel that Broadway represents for some their first steps into the arts and for those individuals it is important that the theater represents everything that they are. Alexandra Billings, who plays Madame Morrible in "Wicked," spoke on her experience as a mixed-race trans woman and how Broadway offered an open door for dialogue and more discussions about change.

"Seeing yourself reflected in art for the very first time is extraordinary both for myself and for them," she said, describing the experience of trans youth who are often in transition and come to see her for the first time on Broadway.

Tickets are now on sale for all three shows, as well as more productions including, "Tina," "Ain't Too Proud - The Life and Times of The Temptations," "Aladdin," and many more are set to open in September or October.

Broadway is also working on new productions, including a stage rendition of George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" series.

COVID-19 Safety Precautions on Broadway

In an interview with [CBS News](#) on Tuesday, President of the Broadway League, Charlotte St. Martin, spoke on the positive impact reopening Broadway would have on New York's overall economy and detailed what plans were being put in place to ensure COVID-19 safety guidelines.

"For audiences they should anticipate at least in the beginning the wearing of masks. More contact-less services and a change in the way people enter and leave the theater," she explained in relation to audience members.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo originally planned to open the theaters on May 19 at 30% capacity, but according to Martin, Broadway cannot afford to sell so few seats. There are currently no plans to increase the cost of tickets.

Martin has indicated that operations to keep the lights on for Broadway costs the city \$14.8 billion. For this reason, Martin believes it is urgent to reopen and help boost New York's falling economy, but not without the full capacity of its audience.

"We believe that Broadway will recover and recover hopefully to where we were. We had been breaking records year after year."

The shut down of Broadway put on hold or fully eliminated the jobs of over 97,000 people.

Martin announced that theaters would not reopen unless they could ensure the safety of the Broadway cast and crew members. However, the official admitted that they were still unsure what that would look like as negotiations were ongoing with staff unions.

Currently the COVID-19 vaccine is available to all New York City residents 16 and older.

However, it has not yet been decided if it would be a requirement for cast and crew members to get the jab before returning to work.

"Some unions would like it if we required it. Some unions wouldn't. We're still talking about it," Martin explained, adding that if the vaccine were to be a requirement, all shows would have to oblige.

Broadway is still in talks with the New York state government about the planned protocols as every day, the world continues to learn something new about the virus. Earlier this month, "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda joined New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and others to tour the Broadway COVID-19 vaccine site in an effort to encourage people to get vaccinated.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Prosecutors Seek Death Penalty, Hate Crime Charges for Atlanta Spa Shooting Suspect
by [MariTi Blaise Lovell](#)

Last year, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp (R) signed legislation allowing additional penalties for those accused of committing a hate crime. On March 16, Robert Aaron Long was accused of shooting eight people and injuring another in three spa shootings in Atlanta. Six of his victims were of Asian descent, prompting many to view race as a motive.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis filed notice on Tuesday that she will seek the death penalty for the Atlanta spa shootings, as well as hate crime offenses after Long was indicted on murder charges.

"I told voters that I did not imagine a circumstance where I would seek it," Willis told [CBS News](#).

"Unfortunately a case has arisen in the first few months of my term that I believe warrants the ultimate penalty and we shall seek it."

The indictment charged Long with four counts of murder, four counts of felony murder, five counts of assault with a deadly weapon, four counts of possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony and one count of domestic terrorism.

Willis also said she would seek hate crime charges, which stem from the fact that most of Long's victims were women of Asian descent. However, US federal and local investigators have not yet produced [concrete evidence](#) that killings were racially motivated.

[China](#) and [South Korea](#) have commented on the US' handling of the shooting, which they also claim to be a part of a steadily growing assault against Asian Americans. In response to the shootings, the Biden administration has pledged to work against anti-Asian and Pacific Islander harassment and hatred.

In a [news conference](#) that took place the day after the March shooting, police officials stated that Long admitted his actions were based on sexual and religious motivations. According to [CNN](#), Long had spent time in a rehab for sex addiction in 2019 and 2020.

It has been speculated that Long frequented the spas he [targeted](#), which include Young's Asian Massage Parlor, Gold Spa and Aromatherapy Spa, and chose to attack the spas because of his lack of self-discipline in the pursuit of sex workers.

The gun Long used in the shooting was legally purchased, but the shooting marks one of many to take place in the US in 2021, which has [prompted](#) cries for stiffer federal gun control laws to clamp down on loopholes.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Shrunken Head From John Huston's 1979 'Wise Blood' Movie Confirmed as Human
by [MariTi Blaise Lovell](#)

Tsantsas are usually referred to as shrunken heads, and often represented ceremonial and cultural value to certain Indigenous groups of Ecuador and Peru. In 1942, Mercer University biologist Jim Harrison acquired a tsantsa while serving in the US Air Force, and it later found its way on the set of John Houston's 1979 movie "Wise Blood."

Researchers at Mercer University have published a study that has confirmed the tsantsa used in the movie was made of human remains, like hair and skin. The study was done in an effort to have the antiquity authenticated and repatriated to its country of origin, Ecuador.

Using 33 criteria provided by Ecuador's National Cultural Heritage Institute, researchers were able to [affirm](#) 30 authenticating indicators, such as the presence of a hole at the back of the head used to remove the skull, hair fibers and other evidence of traditional fabrication.

Shrunken heads are known to be prepared by Jivaroan peoples of the Amazon rainforest, which include the Shuar, Achuar, Awajún/Aguaruna, Wampís/Huambisa, and Candoshi-Shampra (SAAWC) peoples.

The scientists scanned the tsantsa with a computerized tomography (CT) imaging system and produced 3D images that were able to enlarge and distinguish various characteristics regarding the sewing patterns and skin. Limitations that have been cited include the small sample size of actual human DNA; however, the results were accepted by the Ecuadorian government.

According to [NBC News](#), the tsantsa was repatriated in June 2019 to the Ecuadorian Consulate in Atlanta, though it is not clear if it has been returned to Ecuador.

"We wanted it to be viewed by people who could appreciate it in an appropriate context," said Mercer University chemist Adam Kiefer, a co-author of the study.

"This is not an oddity – this is somebody's body, this is somebody's culture, and it's not ours," he said. "So from our perspective, repatriation was essential, and we were very lucky that our university supported this endeavor."

The scientists involved spoke of the benefits of the research done, which could possibly produce a 3D print version of the head. "Artifacts of value can be repatriated while

simultaneously preserved as a volumetric replica for the purposes of a collection,” the study added.

The traditional significance of a ceremonial tsantsas is [thought](#) to have originated as a way of resolving family matters, with the intent of holding a spirit and redistributing its power to the community of the victorious warrior.

Craig D. Byron, another researcher from the study, told the [Art Newspaper](#) that he was grateful it was authenticated so that it could be returned, saying that they “had no business” holding on to the tsantsa.

“It’s a relief to have the specimen out of our possession,” he said. “It had ‘underground’ value; it was illegal to trade or sell; it was the skin from a person’s head.”

According to the [Daily Mail](#), the tsantsa was originally kept in storage before being used in the film. Researchers confirmed damage was done during production, such as gluing the head onto a fake body. The tsantsa can be seen in multiple scenes in the movie, which was filmed in Macon, Georgia, in close proximity to the Mercer University campus.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Dracula’s Castle Becomes New Hot Spot for COVID-19 Jabs
by [MariTi Blaise Lovell](#)

Bran Castle, located on the Transylvanian side of Romania, is said to fit the description of Dracula’s Castle in Bram Stoker’s classic gothic horror novel. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Romania has recorded more than one million infections and has recently approved the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine.

Doctors in Romania are offering citizens a bit of a thrill along with their dose of a COVID-19 vaccine after setting up a vaccination center next to Dracula’s castle as part of an effort to push “vaccination marathons.”

“We wanted to show people a different way to get the [vaccine] needle,” Alexandru Priscu, the marketing manager at Bran Castle, told the [Associated Press](#) on Tuesday.

The European Union’s vaccination campaign was launched over the weekend in hopes that more than five million people would be vaccinated by June 1. Currently, citizens are offered an appointment-free opportunity to visit Bran Castle’s Exhibition of Medieval Instruments of Torture for free while getting the Pfizer jab.

“The idea behind giving access to the exhibit of torture instruments was a way of showing those who come to get vaccinated how jabs used to be done in 500-600 years ago in Europe,” Priscu explained.

Many foreigners have requested the opportunity to get vaccinated in Dracula’s domain, but the event is only open to Romanian citizens. The Romanian government says it wants to vaccinate 10 million people by September in order to boost tourism.

History of ‘Dracula’s Castle’

According to the Bran Castle's [website](#), even though it is often referred to as "Dracula's castle," Vlad the Impaler, who is often referred to as the inspiration behind Dracula, actually lived in a castle located in the Principality of Wallachia, which is now in ruins.

Bran Castle is the only castle in Transylvania to fit Bram Stoker's description, and as such has become known throughout the world as "Dracula's castle." Not to take away from the whimsical, historians believe Vlad the Impaler did frequent Bran during his reign of Wallachia Voivode, when his troops passed through in early [1459](#).

Those who get the spooky jab receive a "vaccination diploma," complete with a fanged medical worker brandishing a syringe, in a bit tongue-in-cheek humor.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - Israel, Palestinian Supporters Clash Near Israeli Consulate in New York City

NEW YORK CITY, May 11 (Sputnik) - At least a thousand pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian protesters clashed at a demonstration near the Israeli consulate in New York City over the recent escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

The demonstration did not turn violent Tuesday afternoon, however, it grew tense as both sides faced off near the Israeli consulate. The New York City Police Department separated the demonstrators with metal guard rails with officers standing in between and around the area. Pro-Palestinian protesters in a confrontation with pro-Israel protesters yelled "Free Palestine," "Go back to Europe" and "Fight back."

Eventually, pro-Palestinian protesters blocked 42nd Street in Manhattan, waved the Palestinian flag and held up signs that read, "No Annexation, No Occupation," "Support Palestinian Resistance," and "With Every Stomp, Every Shout, Freedom For Palestine Without a Doubt." Israeli supporters were seen screaming "What is Palestine?" as some waved the national flag of Israel.

The largest escalation in recent years at the Gaza border began on Monday evening. During this time, more than 600 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. The Iron Dome missile defense system intercepted 200 of them. Israel also delivered strikes on the Gaza Strip, which, as the Palestinian enclave's Health Ministry spokesman said earlier, killed 30 people, including ten children, in two days.

Earlier, chairman of the political bureau of radical Palestinian movement Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, announced the organization's intention to protect the interests of Palestinians in Jerusalem and respond to Israel's actions, thus defining a new balance of forces in the confrontation.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Calls Grow for Canada to Condemn Government Violence in Colombia

TORONTO, May 11 (Sputnik) - Canada must do more to denounce the Colombian government's violent repression of protests in the Latin American country and put pressure on the government of President Ivan Duque, foreign policy advocacy groups told Sputnik.

Canada's top diplomat, Marc Garneau, issued a statement on Sunday evening in which he condemned the violence and chided the "disproportionate use of force" by security forces and acts of vandalism by protesters, however, foreign policy advocacy groups believe this does not go far enough.

"We do not believe the Canadian government has gone far enough," Bianca Mugenyi, Director of the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute (CFPI), told Sputnik on Tuesday. "We would like to see stronger criticism of the security forces violence and the government's responsibility for it."

Mugenyi said that Ottawa "reluctantly" reacted to the deteriorating situation in Colombia only after sizeable protests propped up across Canada, noting that the Minister of Foreign Affairs squared blame at the feet of both parties, despite Duque being accused of employing excessive and often deadly force to quell the protests.

The Canadian Latin America Alliance (CLAA), in a statement to Sputnik, also called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to be stronger in its condemnation of the Colombian government, citing increased Canadian responsibility amid growing economic ties between the two Americas countries.

The CLAA urged Ottawa to press Bogota to disband Colombia's anti-riot police, the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron (ESMAD), investigate state security officers believed to be responsible for the violence and to begin negotiations with the National Strike Committee.

The CFPI's director also pointed to reports of Canadian-made armored vehicles being employed by Colombian security forces during the crackdown, saying that the Trudeau government must probe the allegations.

A Peace Brigades International Canada report published last week alleged that Canadian-made light armored vehicles are possibly being used to commit human rights violations.

In 2014, the Colombian army procured 24 Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs) manufactured in London, Ontario and later in the year Toronto-based INKAS Armoured Vehicles Manufacturing announced that it inked a deal to supply the National Police of Columbia with its Huron armoured personnel carriers (APCs).

Global Affairs Canada, which would have had to approve each of the shipments to Colombia, did not respond to Sputnik's request for comment by the time of publication. Earlier this year, Canada canceled military exports to Turkey after a probe found that Canadian weapons were used in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Protests against an increase in gas prices and utility bills as part of state-proposed tax reform have been underway in Colombia since April 28. Despite Colombian President Ivan Duque withdrawing the controversial reform on Sunday, protesters have continued to rally across the country for a better health system and higher salaries, among other demands.

Colombia's Ministry of Defense has reported more than 430 detentions and more than 800 injuries, both amid law enforcement and protesters, who have been demanding social and healthcare reforms, as well as the demilitarization of cities.

At least 49 people have reportedly been killed and several hundreds have gone missing in the first week of demonstrations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Southern Border Apprehensions Hit 21-Year Monthly High in April - CBP Data

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) encountered more than 178,600 asylum-seeking migrants on the US southern border with Mexico in April, which marks the highest monthly total in 21 years, agency data revealed. CBP released data on Tuesday that showed a total of 178,622 migrants were apprehended at the US southern border in April, the highest monthly total since early 2000. A total of 111,714 migrants were turned away at the southern border in April under the US policy related to COVID-19 pandemic, also known as Title 42. Moreover, a total of 17,171 arrived at the US southern border alone in April, which is a slight drop from the record set in March with nearly 19,000. Most of the migrants arriving at the US southern border continue to be considered single adults and migrant family units, mostly from Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala. So far, 749,613 migrants have been apprehended on the US southern border since October. President Joe Biden's lax stance on immigration during his campaign spurred a record-setting surge in migration to the southern border this year. After the January 20 inauguration ceremony, Biden immediately rolled back key immigration policies put in place by his predecessor President Donald Trump to curb illegal immigration on the US border with Mexico.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Southern Border Apprehensions Hit 21-Year Monthly High - CBP Data

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) encountered more than 178,600 asylum-seeking migrants on the US southern border with Mexico in April, which marks the highest monthly total in 21 years, agency data revealed. CBP released data on Tuesday that showed a total of 178,622 migrants were apprehended at the US southern border in April, the highest monthly total since early 2000. A total of 111,714 migrants were turned away at the southern border in April under the US policy related to COVID-19 pandemic, also known as Title 42. **This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Israel, Palestinian Supporters Clash Near Israeli Consulate in New York City

NEW YORK CITY, May 11 (Sputnik) - At least a thousand pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian protesters clashed at a demonstration near the Israeli consulate in New York City over the

recent escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

The demonstration did not turn violent Tuesday afternoon, however, it grew tense as both sides faced off near the Israeli consulate. The New York City Police Department separated the demonstrators with metal guard rails with officers standing in between and around the area. Pro-Palestinian protesters in a confrontation with pro-Israel protesters yelled "Free Palestine," "Go back to Europe" and "Fight back."

Eventually, pro-Palestinian protesters blocked 42nd Street in Manhattan, waved the Palestinian flag and held up signs that read, "No Annexation, No Occupation," "Support Palestinian Resistance," and "With Every Stomp, Every Shout, Freedom For Palestine Without a Doubt." Israeli supporters were seen screaming "What is Palestine?" as some waved the national flag of Israel.

The largest escalation in recent years at the Gaza border began on Monday evening. During this time, more than 600 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. The Iron Dome missile defense system intercepted 200 of them. Israel also delivered strikes on the Gaza Strip, which, as the Palestinian enclave's Health Ministry spokesman said earlier, killed 30 people, including ten children, in two days.

Earlier, chairman of the political bureau of radical Palestinian movement Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, announced the organization's intention to protect the interests of Palestinians in Jerusalem and respond to Israel's actions, thus defining a new balance of forces in the confrontation.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Senator Calls on Israel, Palestinian Leaders to Discourage Violence in East Jerusalem

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Menendez in a statement called on Israeli and Palestinian military and political leaders to discourage agitators from sparking further violence in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

"Political and military leaders must discourage agitators from further actions that yield more bloodshed, and the Israeli National Police must lower tensions throughout Jerusalem," Menendez said via Twitter on Tuesday.

Menendez also described the Hamas rocket attacks against Israel as terrorism, adding that no country should have to tolerate that kind of threat. The rockets attacks cause security instability for Israelis and Palestinians, he added.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke by telephone with his Israeli counterpart Meir Ben Shabbat Tuesday afternoon to discuss the escalation of violence in the region, including the rockets attacks against Israel, National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne said in a statement.

Moreover, Sullivan said President Biden supports Israel's right to defend itself and conveyed the United States' encouragement to take steps to de-escalate the situation, Horne said. In addition, Sullivan also spoke with Egyptian government officials to discuss steps to restore calm in the coming days in Gaza and Jerusalem.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Security Adviser Condemns Hamas Rocket Attacks in Call With Israel Official - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan in a call with his Israeli counterpart Ben Shabbat condemned the recent rocket attacks on Jerusalem and Tel Aviv by Hamas and conveyed President Joe Biden's support for its right for self-defense, the White House National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne said in a release.

"National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke today with Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben Shabbat. He condemned the ongoing rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups, including against Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. He conveyed the President's unwavering support for Israel's security and for its legitimate right to defend itself and its people, while protecting civilians," the release said on Tuesday.

Sullivan also spoke to Egypt about the crisis, the release said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canadian Provinces of Ontario, Alberta Halt Use of AstraZeneca Vaccine's First Dose

TORONTO, May 11 (Sputnik) - The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Alberta will no longer offer the Oxford-AstraZeneca's first dose of the coronavirus vaccine to its residents, provincial health officials said.

"Effective today, Ontario will be pausing the rollout and administration of the initial doses of AstraZeneca vaccine," Ontario's Chief Medical Officer Dr. David Williams said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

The decision was made amid an increase in blood clotting events, a side effect of the AstraZeneca shot, Williams explained. To date, the country has recorded at least a dozen instances of Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT) following inoculation with AstraZeneca vaccine and at least three deaths.

Alberta pulled the plug on first-dose vaccination with AstraZeneca earlier in the day, albeit citing "global supply challenges" as the reason for the stoppage.

Both provinces say they now intend to save the second doses for those who were first vaccinated with the AstraZeneca vaccine. Additionally, public health officials in Ontario and Alberta say they will review evidence about mixing the mRNA-based vaccines, namely the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna shots, with the AstraZeneca vaccine when it comes to the second dose.

Despite provinces slowly moving away from AstraZeneca and Canada's independent National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) deeming the mRNA shots more effective, Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau, during a press briefing earlier on Tuesday, still encouraged Canadians to receive the first vaccine offered.

Canada's vaccination regime has faced repeated setbacks, with the country experiencing a shortage of doses, despite the Trudeau government lauding deals with numerous vaccine manufacturers.

The vaccination program has also been undermined by mixed messaging with Canadian health officials suspending the use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca and the Johnson & Johnson vaccines because of safety issues, despite assurances about safety and calls from top officials for Canadians to be vaccinated with the first vaccine offered.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russian Embassy in US Thanks Americans for Expressing Condolences Over Kazan Shooting

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The Russian embassy in the United States expressed gratitude to those Americans who sent condolences to the families of those killed and injured in the school shooting incident in Kazan, Tatarstan.

"The Embassy expresses sincere gratitude to Americans who expressed condolences to the family and friends of the victims of the armed attack on school No. 175 Kazan," the Russian Embassy said in a statement via Facebook on Tuesday. "We are grateful to the caring citizens of the United States for the wishes of strength and fortresses of spirit, survivors of the irreparable loss, speedy recovery to the wounded, for whose lives are now fighting for doctors." Earlier in the day, a 19-year-old gunman opened fire in a school in Kazan. The incident was followed by an explosion in the school building.

The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that a counter-terror operation regime was introduced in the area around the school. The attacker was located and detained by responding law enforcement officers. The authorities said the gunman obtained a firearm storage permit shortly before committing the crime.

Two teachers and seven students - four boys and three girls - were killed and 21 others were injured in the incident.

May 12 has been declared a day of mourning in Tatarstan.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Withdrawal From Afghanistan Must Be Seen as Transition, Not Closure - Senator

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States must view its withdrawal from Afghanistan not as closure, but as a transition, US Senator Jack Reed during an event at the Reagan Foundation.

"The president's decision should be seen as a transition, not closure," Reed said on Tuesday. "We still have vital security issues in the region, and the United States must continue to ensure that Afghanistan will not become a safe haven for terrorism, and do all we can to empower the legitimate government of Afghanistan."

President Joe Biden announced last month that US forces would leave Afghanistan by September 11. The Taliban movement has protested the statement saying Washington had agreed to complete the troop withdrawal earlier.

Reed, who chairs the US Senate Armed Services Committee, said the United States must learn from the past and keep a strong presence in the region to ensure that another situation such as the rise of the Islamic State terror group (outlawed in Russia) does not happen again.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Apple Reports Blocking Over \$1.5Bln in Potential App Store Fraud in 2020

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - A combination of technology and human oversight detected and blocked more than \$1.5 billion in sketchy and likely fraudulent transactions on Apple's App Store in 2020, Apple said in a release.

"Apple's combination of sophisticated technology and human expertise protected customers from more than \$1.5 billion in potentially fraudulent transactions, preventing the attempted theft of their money, information, and time - and kept nearly a million risky and vulnerable new apps out of their hands," the release said on Tuesday.

A review team found and rejected nearly 1 million problematic new apps and an additional 1 million app updates in 2020, while assisting more than 180,000 new developers in launching new apps, the release said.

The effort resulted in the rejection of more than 48,000 apps for containing hidden or undocumented features, and more than 150,000 apps because they were found to be spam, copycats, or misleading to users in ways such as manipulating them into making a purchase, the release said.

Another 95,000 apps were removed from the App Store for so called bait-and-switch maneuvers, in which a developer substitutes a nefarious program for a just-approved app, the release noted.

Apple also said it terminated 470,000 developer accounts in 2020 and rejected an additional 205,000 developer enrollments over fraud concerns, preventing "bad actors" from ever submitting an app for approval.

In policing the platform for credit card fraud, Apple said it blocked attempts to purchase stolen goods and services with more than 3 million stolen cards and permanently banned nearly 1 million accounts.

While it's impossible to catch every act of fraud or ill intent before it happens, Apple claimed its anti-fraud efforts make the App Store the safest place in the cyber universe to buy new programs for phones and computers.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Mideast Envoy Urges Palestine, Israel to Stop Fire Immediately, Warns of Full-Scale War

UNITED NATIONS, May 11 (Sputnik) - UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Tor Wennesland called on Israel and Palestine to immediately stop fighting, warning that the escalation is heading toward a full-scale war.

"Stop the fire immediately. We're escalating towards a full scale war. Leaders on all sides have to take the responsibility of deescalation," Wennesland said in a Twitter statement on Tuesday. "The cost of war in Gaza is devastating [and] is being paid by ordinary people. UN is working with all sides to restore calm. Stop the violence now."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Dow Jones Drops 1.4% After Streak of Record Highs on Wall Street

NEW YORK, May 11 (Sputnik) - The Dow Jones Industrial Average, Wall Street's broadest equity barometer, on Tuesday posted its largest daily drop since February, ending a streak of record highs during which investors rotated from high-flying tech stocks into industrial and leisure stocks cheapened by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Dow lost 1.4 percent, or 472 points, to close at 34,271 as players took profit on its recent gains. It was the index's sharpest one-day correction since February 26, when it lost 1.5 percent.

On Monday, the Dow crossed the 35,000 mark the first time ever, after a week of record highs spurred by the sector rotation on Wall Street. Despite its correction in the latest session, the broadest US equity benchmark remained up almost 12 percent on the year.

The S&P 500, which groups the top 500 stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, slid 0.8 percent, or 35 points, to close at 4,153.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite index ended virtually flat, conceding just 12 points to finish at 13,389. Nasdaq lost 2.6 percent on Monday for its biggest one-day drop since March 3 as investors sold high-flying growth stocks in technology such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Netflix and Google to buy those of value in the leisure and industrial sector.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik)

SHOOTING IN KAZAN

* May 12 was declared a day of mourning in Russia's Republic of Tatarstan following the deadly shooting in a school in Kazan, Lilia Galimova, the head of the local presidential press office, said.

* The death toll from the school shooting in Russia's Kazan reached nine, as one more woman died, Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov said.

* Russian President Vladimir Putin extends deep condolences to the relatives of those killed in the school shooting in Russia's Kazan, he has ordered ensuring that those injured receive all the necessary medical assistance, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is saddened to learn about the deaths of nine people in a school shooting in the Russian city of Kazan and strongly condemned this act of violence, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

COLONIAL PIPELINE ATTACK

* Colonial Pipeline will be able to make the full restart decision on Wednesday, but will require several days to be up and running, US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said in a briefing.

* The United States has not yet assigned blame for the Colonial Pipeline attack, but Russia has a duty to "act responsibly" on the matter, since the cyberattack originated in the country, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters on Tuesday.

* The American public has no reason to hoard gasoline after the Colonial pipeline attack, Granholm said.

* The United States has issued an emergency fuel waiver to help eliminate shortages in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia in the wake of the attack on the Colonial Pipeline, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said.

UNREST IN JERUSALEM

* Riots resumed in the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, where several Arab families received eviction orders from Israeli authorities, and police use special equipment to disperse the crowd, the Israeli police said.

* US President Joe Biden receives daily briefings on the Israeli-Palestinian flare-up and directed his team to engage intensively with both sides to deescalate the conflict, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters.

* Russia is deeply concerned about the dangerous development of the situation in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem and calls on Israel and Palestine to avoid steps fraught with further escalation of tension, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

ROCKET ATTACK IN ISRAEL

* The Kataib Qassam brigade of Palestinian movement Hamas fired 130 rockets in the direction of Tel Aviv in response to airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, Abu Hamza, a spokesman for Saraya al-Quds, the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, said on Tuesday.

* The rocket attack on Israel is absolutely unacceptable and must be stopped immediately, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said.

* Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi spoke with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken amid Palestinian rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip and said that Israel reserved the right to defend its sovereignty.

OPEN SKIES TREATY

* The United States has not yet decided on its participation in the Open Skies Treaty going forward, however, the administration is actively reviewing the matter while also consulting with its partners, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

TREASON CHARGES AGAINST UKRAINIAN OPPOSITION LEADER

* Ukrainian Prosecutor General Irina Venediktova confirmed that law enforcement officers suspected the head of the political council of the Opposition Platform - For Life party Viktor Medvedchuk and the same faction's parliamentarian Taras Kozak of treason and embezzlement of national resources in Crimea.

* Ivan Bakanov, the head of Ukraine's security service, said that Medvedchuk allegedly transferred secret military data to his party member Taras Kozak who was visiting Russia.

NEW OPEC FORECAST

* The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) says expectations for oil demand this year remain unchanged and will average 96.5 million barrels per day.

* Crude oil production in the United States is expected to decline by 0.28 million barrels per day this year, the OPEC said.

* The OPEC says its compliance with the OPEC+ oil production cuts deal totaled 122 percent in April, as production averaged 25.08 million barrels per day.

* The OPEC has improved its forecast for Russia's oil and gas condensate production this year and expects it to increase by 20,000 barrels per day, to an average of 10.61 million barrels.

PUTIN-BIDEN MEETING

* The United States attempts to "narrow" the agenda of a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart, Joe Biden, in terms of strategic stability, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday.

* Biden and Putin have agreed to maintain dialogue on strategic stability issues, such as arms control and emerging security issues, Ambassador Robert A. Wood, the US permanent representative to the Conference on Disarmament, said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UNSC to Hold Closed Discussion Wednesday on Israeli-Palestinian Flare-Up - Source

UNITED NATIONS, May 11 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will meet on Wednesday morning behind closed doors to discuss the developments in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, a diplomatic source at the Security Council told Sputnik.

"The UN Security Council plans to meet at 9:00 a.m. EDT tomorrow to hold closed consultations," the source said on Tuesday, when asked to confirm whether the council intends to address the deepening Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

On Tuesday morning, the Israel Defense Forces said that over 200 rockets were fired from Gaza toward Israel, with most of them intercepted by the Iron Dome air defense system. In response, Israel struck 130 targets of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group, including two tunnels and a Hamas intelligence facility, as well as sites manufacturing and storing weapons. At least 15 Hamas militants were killed in the airstrikes, according to the Israeli army.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Personal Info of 22 Washington DC Police Officers Released Online by Hackers - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - An unknown group of allegedly Russian-speaking hackers has released the personal data on 22 former and current Washington police officers after the Washington Metropolitan Police Department refused to pay a \$4 million ransom, NBC News reported on Tuesday.

The new hacking incident is not related to the Colonial Pipeline cyberattack and was conducted by a different group, though in both cases the hackers are suspected of being Russian-speaking, the report said.

The published files on the police officers include such data as Social Security numbers, dates of birth, fingerprints, polygraph test result, as well as residential and financial history, the report said.

The ransomware attack initially happened in April and the hackers demanded \$4 million for non-disclosure of the stolen data while the police department made a counter-offer of \$100,000 that was eventually rejected.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Judge Dismisses NRA Bankruptcy Case Over Attempt to Avoid Civil Lawsuit - Filing

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - A US judge issued an order on Tuesday dismissing the National Rifle Association's (NRA) attempt to file for bankruptcy and move the organization to Texas because it finds the organization is trying to dodge a civil lawsuit from the New York Attorney General.

"The Court agrees with the NYAG [New York Attorney General] that the NRA is using this bankruptcy case to address a regulatory enforcement problem, not a financial one," US Judge Harlin Hale wrote in the order. "The Court finds that the NRA did not file the bankruptcy petition in good faith because this filing was not for a purpose intended or sanctioned by the Bankruptcy Code."

Bankruptcy filings typically freeze lawsuits against people or corporations. The NRA had said its bankruptcy filing would halt the New York Attorney General's lawsuit alleging financial mismanagement, with hopes James' case would be dismissed or transferred out of state.

In response to Judge Hale's ruling on Tuesday, James said the NRA does not dictate if and where it will answer for its actions as no one is above the law. James added that the case will continue in a New York court.

The NRA is one of most powerful lobby groups in the United States. Last year, New York Attorney General Letitia James filed a lawsuit to dissolve the NRA over alleged corruption in the organization. The NRA then filed for bankruptcy protection and said it planned to reincorporate in the more gun-friendly Texas after being present for 150 years in New York.

On January 21, a US federal judge rejected the NRA's bid to dismiss the New York Attorney General's lawsuit.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Renews Trump National Emergency on IT, Communications Supply Chain - White House

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has renewed his predecessor Donald Trump's two-year-long national emergency declaration to safeguard supply chains for information and communications technology, the White House announced on Tuesday.

"[T]he national emergency declared on May 15, 2019, must continue in effect beyond May 15, 2021," the White House said in a notice. "Therefore ... I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13873 with respect to securing the information and communications technology and services supply chain."

The unrestricted acquisition or use in the United States of information and communications technology or services developed or supplied by foreign adversaries augmented their ability to create and exploit vulnerabilities in information and communications technology or services, with potentially catastrophic effects, the notice added.

The threat continued to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, according to the notice.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Extends Sanctions Authorities Related to Yemen Conflict - Letter to Congress

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden in a notice to US Congress on Tuesday said he signed an emergency order that extends authorities to sanction those who threaten the security and stability of Yemen.

"The actions and policies of certain former members of the Government of Yemen and others in threatening Yemen's peace, security, and stability continue to pose an unusual and

extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States," Biden said in a notice. "The national emergency declared on May 16, 2012 to deal with that threat must continue in effect beyond May 16, 2021."

In March, the US invoked the same order to impose sanctions on individuals associated with the Houthi movement.

Executive Order 13611, signed in 2012 by then-President Barack Obama, was imposed after the Yemen government and opposition failed to implement a 2011 agreement that would have led to a peaceful power transition, Biden said.

The order authorizes the US to block property of persons that threaten Yemen's security and stability. The sanctions also ban US persons from participating in any transactions with those designated.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Pleads Enbridge's Case in Pipeline Dispute With Michigan in US Federal Court

TORONTO, May 11 (Sputnik) - Canada pleaded energy giant Enbridge's case in its dispute with Michigan over a pipeline slated for closure in written testimony submitted in US federal court on Tuesday.

In November, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that her government is moving forward with a plan to shut down Canadian energy giant Enbridge's Line 5 pipelines through the Straits of Mackinac, citing the threat of oil spills that may devastate the environment and economy.

"The public and foreign policy interests that would be harmed by a premature shutdown in this case are extraordinarily substantial. Unless and until it is determined that Michigan's shutdown order is consistent with the Parties' rights and obligations established by the United States and Canada in the 1977 Treaty, this Court should take appropriate measures to ensure that Enbridge is not compelled to shut down Line 5," the Canadian government argued in an amicus curiae filed by Gordon Giffin, former US ambassador to Canada and Ottawa's lead lawyer.

The Canadian government is arguing that the 540,000 barrels of predominantly western Canadian oil and natural gas, that flows through the pipeline daily, is essential to the operations of both Canadian provinces and certain US states, including Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Ottawa is also pointing to the Canada-US transit pipelines agreement signed in 1977, which says that both countries vow not to impede transit of hydrocarbon products from two points in Canada via the United States, or vice versa.

Enbridge previously asked Ottawa for help, including the amicus curiae, ahead of the proceedings on May 12, when the US District Court for the Western District of Michigan begins deliberation on whether it will take up the question of jurisdiction.

Ottawa has lent its support to the pipeline it deems essential to the country's energy security, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau saying during a press briefing that his government will defend Canadian interests.

Canada is also engaged in diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute, although, it appears to have made little headway, with Enbridge Executive Vice President and President, Vern Yu, telling the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States in March that Canadian ambassador to the US Kirsten Hillman was denied a meeting with Whitmer.

US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm on Tuesday declined to weigh in on the Line 5, citing it the ongoing legal process.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

India Has Taught America Not to Underestimate COVID-19 - US Chief Pandemic Adviser

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - India has taught the United States not to underestimate the potency of a second wave of the COVID, top US infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci said on Tuesday.

"From India's outbreak, I think there are lessons we should apply to our response here in the US," Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases and an adviser to President Joe Biden's COVID Response Team, told a hearing in Congress. "I think one of the important things is don't ever underestimate the situation."

The United States remains the most COVID-infected country with more than 32.7 million positive cases and over 582,000 deaths since the global outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. But India has quickly caught up as number two in just over a month, having 23 million cases and almost 250,000 deaths.

Fauci said the United States learned two valuable lessons from countries like India and others afflicted with second waves of COVID: First, not to reopen too quickly from lockdowns; two, when they do reopen, to have a robust public health system that could cope with such emergencies.

"The reason that India is in such dire straits now is that they had an original surge and made the incorrect assumption that they were finished with it," Fauci said. "They opened up prematurely and wind up having a surge right now that we're all very well aware of is extremely devastating. That's the first thing we learned. The second thing is preparedness with regard to public health which is a lesson to be learned for future pandemics."

A number of US states, especially those run by Republicans opposed to President Biden's Democratic Party such as Florida, Texas and Mississippi, have scrapped masking laws and other COVID restrictions in an effort to fully reopen their economies from lockdowns, citing the country's vaccination drive, which has immunized more than 30 percent of the population against the virus.

Fauci and officials at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention maintain that facial covering and social distancing were still important in breaking the spread of the virus as the remaining two-thirds of Americans have not been fully vaccinated and could be prone to new COVID variants.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia Has Duty to 'Act Responsibly' on Colonial Pipeline Cyberattack – White House

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – The United States has not yet assigned blame for the Colonial Pipeline attack, but Russia has a duty to “act responsibly” on the matter, since the cyberattack originated in the country, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters on Tuesday.

“The [US] President [Joe Biden] also said that his intelligence community has not made a full assessment yet, which remains the case. But also that, given that this entity, that the FBI has concluded ... the attack was located in Russia, that the country has a responsibility to act responsibly,” Psaki said on Tuesday.

She added that the US would wait for its intelligence community to complete its full assessment before conveying more about it.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Saddened by Loss of Life in Colombia Protests, Urges Authorities to Probe - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is saddened by the loss of life in the deadly protests in Colombia, and urges the country's authorities to investigate the use of excessive force by police against demonstrators, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

“We're deeply saddened by the loss of life during the protests that have taken place throughout Colombia in recent days,” Price said in a press briefing. “We do call upon the police to respect the rights of peaceful protesters. We continue to urge the utmost restraint by Colombian police in maintaining public order.”

In addition, the US administration also calls on Colombian authorities to continue to investigate reports of “police excess” amid the demonstrations, Price said.

Price said the Biden administration continues to engage with Colombian partners via the US Embassy in Bogota to address the current violence.

Protests against an increase in gas prices and utility bills as part of state-proposed tax reform have been underway in Colombia since April 28. Despite Colombian President Ivan Duque withdrawing the controversial reform on Sunday, protesters have continued to rally across the country for a better health system and higher salaries, among other demands.

Colombia's Ministry of Defense has reported more than 430 detentions and more than 800 injuries, both amid law enforcement and protesters who have been demanding social and healthcare reforms, as well as the demilitarization of cities. At least 49 people have reportedly been killed and several hundreds have gone missing in the first week of demonstrations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Earmarks \$36Bln in Aid for Minority Students Impacted by COVID-19 - Education Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The US will provide \$36 billion in emergency grants to students in minority-serving colleges and universities whose education was adversely affected by the pandemic, the Education Department said on Tuesday.

"These grants will help over 5,000 institutions of higher education, including HBCUs, TCCUs, and HSIs, provide emergency financial aid to millions of students and ensure learning continues during the COVID-19 national emergency," the department said in a press release.

The \$36 billion package includes more than \$10 billion for community colleges, \$2.6 billion earmarked for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and \$190 million for Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs). An additional \$6 billion will help students at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), the release said.

The program funded by the recently approved \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan more than doubles subsidies provided in earlier COVID-19 relief programs such as the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Ukraine Agree to Hold Trade, Investment Talks This Year - USTR

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States and Ukraine will hold an investment council meeting later this year to expand trade and other bilateral commercial activities, the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) announced in a readout on Tuesday.

"United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai today met virtually with Ukrainian Minister of Economic Development, Trade, and Agriculture Ihor Petrashko," the readout said. "They agreed to hold a US-Ukraine Trade and Investment Council this year to address shared areas of interest."

Tai and Petrashko exchanged ideas on strengthening the US-Ukraine trade relationship, the State Department said.

The two officials also discussed the importance of Ukraine's economic reform agenda, the readout added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Receives Daily Briefings on Jerusalem, Gaza, Directed His Team to Engage - Psaki

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden receives daily briefings on the Israeli-Palestinian flare-up and directed his team to engage intensively with both sides to deescalate the conflict, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters on Tuesday. "The President has been briefed daily on developments in Jerusalem and Gaza. He has just received another update before I came out here from the National Security Adviser. Since last week he has directed his team to engage intensively with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials as well as leaders throughout the Middle East," Psaki said during a daily briefing. Psaki added that Biden's team is communicating "a clear and consistent message" in support of deescalation.

"That is our primary focus," Psaki added.

She said that Biden's support for Israel's security and its right to defend itself is "fundamental and will never waiver."

Psaki condemned ongoing rocket attacks on Israeli cities from Gaza.

"We also stand against extremism that has inflicted violence on both communities," she added.

She reiterated US support for a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"That is the only way to ensure the just and lasting peace that two peoples have struggled to achieve," Psaki said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Inflation Dynamics Heightened by Fuel Pipeline Outage, Chip Shortage - Top Fed Official

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US inflation dynamics have been heightened by the shutdown of the country's main fuel pipeline and a shortage of microchips that have led to higher gasoline prices and extended costs for automakers, Federal Reserve Governor Lael Brainard said on Tuesday.

"Recent pipeline disruptions add some uncertainty," Brainard said in a live-streamed speech to a business community. "The production of certain semiconductors may take some time to ramp up, and the feedback effects between shipping delays and container shortages appear to be only slowly working themselves out."

The Colonial Pipeline, which delivers about 45 percent of the fuel consumed on the US East Coast, was hit by a cyberattack on Friday. As the shutdown entered its fifth day, US media reported that fuel pumps in the East Coast were running out of fuel and there were long lines of cars waiting to fill up. The average price of gasoline has also soared on the disruption to a seven-year high that was just short of \$3 per gallon.

US automakers were, meanwhile, struggling to keep up with the demand for cars in an economy recovering from the coronavirus pandemic while facing a shortage of semiconductors that were key to the infotainment, power steering and braking systems of cars. Industry giant General Motors said it has temporarily idled or extended shutdowns at several of its automaking plants due to the chip shortage, which will reduce its operating profit by \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion this year.

The US economy expanded at an annual rate of 6.4 percent in the first quarter of this year, after the pandemic-induced contraction of 3.5 percent for all 2020. The Federal Reserve projects that growth through 2021 would be 6.5 percent.

The trouble is inflation. The Fed has forecast that Personal Consumption Expenditures, a measure of inflation, will grow by an average 2.4 percent in 2021. But Brainard and other officials at the central bank fear that in the near term, "transitory" inflation could be greater due to a surge in prices of everything from copper to iron ore and lumber.

"It is much more difficult to predict the size and duration of supply-side bottlenecks and how these will interact with the pattern of demand to feed through into inflation," Brainard said in her speech. "And demand growth itself is expected to moderate after a reopening surge, broadly coinciding with the time when some of the current tailwinds from fiscal support and makeup consumption turn to headwinds."

But even in the post-pandemic era, there could be "additional demand and supply surprises that could further complicate the inflation picture", she said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, WHO Regional Office Providing Brazil \$17Mln in COVID-19 Medications - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is partnering with the Pan American Health Organization to provide Brazil \$17 million in novel coronavirus medications, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"In view of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in Brazil, the United States is partnering with the Pan American Health Organization, or PAHO, to provide access to approximately \$17 million worth of essential medications to treat critically ill COVID-19 patients who require intubation to be connected to life-saving ventilators," Price said in a press briefing.

Price said 164 pallets of medication arrived in Brazil earlier on Tuesday that should help sustain several hospitals in the country for at least 30 days.

PAHO, headquartered in Washington, DC, is the World Health Organization's regional office for the Americas. PAHO is also a specialized agency for the Inter-American System.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Saddened by Loss of Life in Colombia Protests, Urges Authorities to Probe - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is saddened by the loss of life in the deadly protests in Colombia, and urges the country's authorities to investigate the use of excessive force by police against demonstrators, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"We're deeply saddened by the loss of life during the protests that have taken place throughout Colombia in recent days," Price said in a press briefing. "We do call upon the police to respect the rights of peaceful protesters. We continue to urge the utmost restraint by Colombian police in maintaining public order."

In addition, the US administration also calls on Colombian authorities to continue to investigate reports of "police excess" amid the demonstrations, Price said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Has Not Made Decision on Future Participation in Open Skies Treaty - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has not yet decided on its participation in the Open Skies Treaty going forward, however, the administration is actively reviewing the matter while also consulting with its partners, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"We haven't made a decision on the future of American participation in the Open Skies Treaty. We are at the moment actively reviewing matters related to the treaty. Importantly, we are consulting with our allies and partners, as we always do, on these matters," Price said. "As this process continues, we encourage Russia to take steps come into compliance with the treaty."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Receives Daily Briefings on Jerusalem, Gaza, Directed His Team to Engage - Psaki

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden receives daily briefings on the Israeli-Palestinian flare-up and directed his team to engage intensively with both sides to deescalate the conflict, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters on Tuesday.

"The President has been briefed daily on developments in Jerusalem and Gaza. He has just received another update before I came out here from the National Security Adviser. Since last week he has directed his team to engage intensively with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials as well as leaders throughout the Middle East," Psaki said during a daily briefing.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Charges 3 New York City Police Officers in Tow-Truck Bribery Scheme - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – US authorities arrested three police officers in New York City for receiving payments from a tow-truck firm in exchange for referrals of accident victims, Justice Department said on Thursday.

"A nine-count indictment was unsealed today in federal court in Brooklyn charging Heather Busch, Robert Hassett, and Robert Smith with five counts of using interstate facilities to commit bribery and two counts of conspiracy," the Justice Department said in a press release.

Smith, who recently retired, is also charged with attempting to transport at least one kilogram of heroin, the release said.

The defendants were arrested Tuesday morning and scheduled for arraignment before US Chief Magistrate Judge Cheryl Pollak in the afternoon, the release added.

Beginning in September 2016, Smith and Hassett bypassed a police system that randomly picks licensed towing companies and directed accident victims to a single company in exchange for thousands of dollars in cash bribe payments. In March 2020 and just prior to his retirement, Smith recruited Busch to participate in the towing scheme, according to the release.

In July 2020, the then-retired Smith accepted a bag from one individual containing what Smith understood to be a kilogram of heroin, which he subsequently delivered to a second individual in exchange for \$1,200 in cash, the release said.

Smith and Hassett are also accused of selling names of accident victims gleaned from a police data base to an individual who claimed to represent physical therapists and personal injury lawyers, the release said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sees Encouraging Steps From Israel, Palestinians to De-Escalate Tensions - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has seen some encouraging steps from Israel and the Palestinians to reduce tensions in the region, such as the Israeli Supreme Court delaying a decision in the the Sheikh Jarrah case and the Palestinians calling off the Eid celebration, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"We have seen some encouraging steps, both from Israel and the Palestinians," Price said in a press briefing. "The decision yesterday to reroute the Jerusalem Day parade, the decision on the part of the Israeli Supreme Court to delay the Sheikh Jarrah decision was welcomed as was the decision by [Palestinian President Mahmoud] Abbas to call off the Eid celebration."

The US administration is deeply concerned about the escalating tensions between Israel and "those launching rockets in Gaza," and calls on all sides to exercise restraint, Price added.

Price said the current tensions show the time is not right for a two-state solution.

The largest ever escalation between Israel and Palestine over the recent years broke out earlier this week on the borders of the Gaza Strip. Starting from Monday night, air raid sirens have not died down in Ashkelon and other Israeli cities bordering the Palestinian enclave. Starting at 1:00 p.m. local time (10:00 GMT) on Tuesday, Palestine's factions began the shelling of Ashdod.

On Tuesday morning, the Israel Defense Forces said that over 200 rockets were fired from Gaza toward Israel, with most of them intercepted by the Iron Dome air defense system. In

response, Israel struck 130 targets of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group, including two tunnels and a Hamas intelligence facility, as well as sites manufacturing and storing weapons. At least 15 Hamas militants were killed in the airstrikes, according to the Israeli army.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Colonial Pipeline to Decide on Full Restart Wednesday - Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - Colonial Pipeline will be able to make the full restart decision on Wednesday, but will require several days to be up and running, US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said in a briefing.

"I have had several conversations with the CEO of Colonial [Pipeline] and who has indicated that by close of business tomorrow, Colonial will be in a position to make the full restart decision. But even after that decision is made, it will take a few days to ramp up operations. This pipeline has never been shut down before, it travels great distances, there is fuel in the pipeline... So it will take a few days to be up and running," Granholm said on Tuesday.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Health Official Says Booster Shots May Be Needed to Prevent Second Wave of COVID-19

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - Those vaccinated for COVID-19 in the United States will probably need booster shots to ensure they do not recontract the virus, while antivirals must also be developed to widen immunity, US viral scientist David Kessler said on Tuesday.

"There is a probability that booster doses may be needed," Kessler, Chief Science Officer at the Department of Health and Human Services and member of the White House COVID Response Team, told a Congressional hearing when asked by US senators what was required to contain the pandemic. "To mitigate the risk of viral evolution, we also need to hasten our search for an antiviral."

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky, meanwhile, told CNBC the US government is planning for the potential need for booster shots "just in case." It is still unclear if booster shots will be necessary to manage future variants of COVID, with new strains of the virus since the fall of last year causing fresh major outbreaks in Britain, Brazil and, most lately, India.

The United States has administered 262 million doses of coronavirus vaccines so far, fully immunizing 116 million Americans or 35.2 percent of the population. President Joe Biden has set a personal target of vaccinating 70 percent of adult Americans by the Fourth of July Independence Day holiday.

Kessler said if booster shots were needed, they would be administered free to Americans, just like the first round of COVID-19 vaccines.

"We do have the funds to purchase the next round and to assure if there are boosters that they are free just as the last round," he told the senators at Tuesday's hearing. "People who are immunosuppressed, who do not mount an immune response for a number of reasons or choose not to be vaccinated, will continue to be vulnerable and we need options for them. The antibody treatments are one approach but a simple oral antiviral can add to our armamentarium to bring this epidemic under control."

Vaccine developer Pfizer said last month that it could have before the end of next year the first oral antiviral drug to treat COVID at the first sign of illness.

The drug is part of a class of medicines called protease inhibitors and works by inhibiting an enzyme that the virus needs to replicate in human cells, Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US May Waive Shipping Restrictions in Response to Pipeline Attack - Transportation Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The US is considering a temporary waiver of Jones Act shipping restrictions in an effort to offset the negative impacts of the ransomware cyber attack on Colonial Pipeline, the Transportation Department said on Tuesday.

The Jones Act requires that goods shipped to US ports be transported on vessels that are built, owned, and operated by American citizens or permanent residents.

"The US Department of Transportation (USDOT) has started the work needed to enable consideration of a temporary and targeted waiver of the Jones Act," the release said. "USDOT's Maritime Administration (MARAD) initiated a survey of Jones Act-qualified vessels to begin the process of evaluating what assets are available in the Jones Act fleet to carry petroleum products within the Gulf, and from the Gulf up the Eastern Seaboard."

A ransomware attack committed by the DarkSide hacking group shut down much of Colonial Pipeline's operations. The company supplies roughly half of the fuel for the Eastern US.

In addition to the change in shipping regulations, USDOT officials have also issued hours of service exemptions for trucks transporting refined petroleum products. Federal Railroad Administration officials are also determining their capacity to help transport fuel.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Energy Secretary Says No Cause to Hoard Gasoline After Colonial Pipeline Attack

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The American public has no reason to hoard gasoline after the Colonial pipeline attack, US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said on Tuesday.

"There should be no cause for hoarding gasoline, especially in light of the fact that the pipeline should be substantially operational by the end of the week," Granholm said during press briefing.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sees Encouraging Steps From Israel, Palestinians to De-Escalate Tensions - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has seen some encouraging steps from Israel and the Palestinians to reduce tensions in the region, such as the Israeli Supreme Court delaying decision in the the Sheikh Jarrah case and the Palestinians calling off the Eid celebration.

"We have seen some encouraging steps, both from Israel and the Palestinians," Price said in a press briefing. "The decision yesterday to reroute the Jerusalem Day parade, the decision on the part of the Israeli Supreme Court to delay the Sheikh Jarrah decision was welcomed as was the decision by [Palestinian President Mahmoud] Abbas to call off the Eid celebration."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, WHO Regional Office Providing Brazil \$17Mln in COVID-19 Medications - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is partnering with the Pan American Health Organization to provide Brazil \$17 million in novel coronavirus medications, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"In view of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in Brazil, the United States is partnering with the Pan American Health Organization, or PAHO, to provide access to approximately \$17 million worth of essential medications to treat critically ill COVID-19 patients who require intubation to be connected to life-saving ventilators," Price said in a press briefing.

PAHO, headquartered in Washington, DC, is the World Health Organization's regional office for the Americas. PAHO is also a specialized agency for the Inter-American System.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Harris Reaffirms US Commitment to Democracy in Tunisia - White House

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - Vice President Kamala Harris spoke over the telephone with Tunisia President Kaid Saied during which she reaffirmed the United States' commitment to supporting Tunisia's democracy, the White House said in a readout of the call on Tuesday.

"The two leaders reaffirmed the importance of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and fighting corruption. The Vice President underscored the United States' sustained commitment to supporting Tunisia's democracy," the readout said.

Saied assumed power in 2019 after winning in a landslide victory. He was preceded by Beji Caid Essebsi, the first democratically elected president of Tunisia following the revolution in 2011.

Harris and Saied also talked about economic reform in Tunisia amid the coronavirus pandemic, the country's discussions with the International Monetary Fund and the importance of bilateral security cooperation, according to the readout.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Calls on All Sides in Israel, Gaza to Exercise Restraint - State Dept

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is calling on both Israel and those launching rockets from Gaza to exercise restraint and calm amid ongoing escalation of violence, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"We are deeply concerned about the escalation between Israel and those launching rockets from Gaza and we call for restraint and for calm," Price said. "The Palestinian people also have the right to safety and security just as Israelis do... We call on all sides to exercise restraint and to exercise calm."

Price also said Israel has the right to defend itself and respond to attacks.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US May Waive Shipping Restrictions in Response to Pipeline Attack - Transportation Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The US is considering a temporary waiver of Jones Act shipping restrictions in an effort to offset the negative impacts of the ransomware cyber attack on Colonial Pipeline, the Transportation Department said on Tuesday.

The Jones Act requires that goods shipped to US ports be transported on vessels that are built, owned, and operated by American citizens or permanent residents.

"The US Department of Transportation (USDOT) has started the work needed to enable consideration of a temporary and targeted waiver of the Jones Act," the release said. "USDOT's Maritime Administration (MARAD) initiated a survey of Jones Act-qualified vessels to begin the process of evaluating what assets are available in the Jones Act fleet to carry petroleum products within the Gulf, and from the Gulf up the Eastern Seaboard."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trudeau Promises Canadians 'One Dose Summer' Conditional on More Jabs, Less COVID-19 Cases

TORONTO, May 11 (Sputnik) - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday that Canadians can enjoy a summer with fewer public health restrictions if vaccination rates pick up and the number of new coronavirus cases begins to fall.

"We all want to have a summer, where we can see our loved ones and invite friends over for barbecues. We can have that summer. We can have a one dose summer," Trudeau told reporters in Ottawa.

However, a summer with fewer pandemic-induced restrictions is conditional on the number of new infections being "way down" and at least 75 percent of Canadians having received their first shot, the Prime Minister noted.

While the number of new cases, nationally, is slowly declining, according to Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam, Canadian public health officials are still reporting an average of over 7,000 new infections daily – far more than during the first wave of the pandemic. Overall, Canada has recorded nearly 1.3 million coronavirus cases since the onset of the pandemic as well as 24,682 fatalities.

To date, 16,445,582 Canadians have received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine, however, only 3.4 percent of adults have been fully immunized, with the Trudeau government prioritizing first-dose vaccination and extending the time between doses to four months.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Two-Thirds of US Voters Reject Biden View That Migrant Surge Not a 'Crisis' - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden and administration officials' repeated rejection of the term "crisis" to describe a migrant surge across the southern US border rings hollow with two thirds of Americans, a Rasmussen Reports poll said on Tuesday.

"[The] survey finds that 66 percent of likely US voters believe the current situation with migrants at the US-Mexico border is a crisis. Twenty percent (20 percent) say it's not a crisis, and 13 percent are not sure," a press release explaining the poll said.

In media interviews Biden has blamed the migrant surge on a mess inherited from the Trump administration and has declined to call the influx a crisis - a view repeatedly expressed by key officials in his administration.

One of Biden's first acts in office was to eliminate measures imposed during the Trump administration to quell a 2019 surge in which US border agents stopped nearly 1 million migrants who illegally crossed from Mexico.

US officials apprehended 172,331 migrants in March, the highest one month total in more than two decades, putting the nation on pace to break the previous annual record of 977,000 apprehensions in 2019.

Separately, the number of deportations carried out by the US authorities in April fell to the lowest monthly level on record as illegal border crossings continued at a 20-year high, US media reported earlier this month.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Second Malicious Actor Exploited Existing SolarWinds Vulnerability - Cyber Security Agency

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - A second malicious actor besides Russia exploited existing vulnerabilities in the SolarWinds software, Cybersecurity and Information Security Agency (CISA) Acting Director Brandon Wales said during a congressional hearing on Tuesday.

"There was a vulnerability in the software that was discovered by another malicious actor. They did use that to compromise some SolarWinds devices in a number of different places," Wales told the US Senate Homeland Security Committee.

The Biden administration holds Russia's intelligence agency SVR responsible for the hack of the SolarWinds' systems in February and as imposed sanctions against Russia over the cyber attack.

Wales said the second cyberattacker used a preexisting exploit. However, Wales did not respond when whether he could name the second actor or confirm whether it was a state entity. Russia has rejected all allegations of involvement in the SolarWinds cyberattack as baseless.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ex-Nurses Aide Gets 7 Life Sentences for Murder at Veterans' Hospitals - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - A former nursing assistant at a veterans' hospital in the state of West Virginia faces seven consecutive life terms in prison after pleading guilty to killing seven elderly patients with insulin injections – the US Justice Department said on Tuesday.

"[Reta] Mays was employed as a nursing assistant at the VAMC [Veterans Administration Medical Center], working the night shift during the same period of time that the veterans in her care died of hypoglycemia while being treated at the hospital," the Justice Department said in a press release. "She admitted to administering insulin to several patients with the intent to cause their deaths."

Mays pleaded guilty in July 2020 to seven counts of second-degree murder in the deaths of seven veterans. She also pleaded guilty to a single count of assault with intent to commit murder involving the death of an eighth patient, the release said.

US District Judge Thomas Kleeh sentenced Mays to seven consecutive life sentences, one for each murder, and an additional 240 months for the eighth victim, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Chief Calls for Halt to Spiraling Escalation Between Palestine, Israel - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 11 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed a grave concern about the recent uptick in violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and called for an immediate halt to the spiraling escalation, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"The Secretary-General is gravely concerned by the serious escalations in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, including the latest escalations in Gaza, which add to the heightened tensions and violence in the in occupied East Jerusalem," Dujarric said.

The spokesperson also said the Israeli security forces "must exercise maximum restraint and calibrate their use of force, the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars towards Israeli population centers is unacceptable. This spiraling escalation must cease immediately."

The United Nations is currently working with all parties to de-escalate the situation urgently, Dujarric added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Chief Saddened by Shooting in Kazan, Condemns Act of 'Senseless Violence' - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 11 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is saddened to learn about the deaths of nine people in a school shooting in the Russian city of Kazan and strongly condemned this act of violence, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The Secretary-General is deeply saddened by the reported deaths of nine people, including seven children, in a shooting today outside a school in the city of Kazan in the Russian Federation," Dujarric said. "He strongly condemns this act of senseless violence and expresses his deepest condolences to the victims' families, as well as the government and people of the Russian Federation. He wishes those injured a speedy and full recovery."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Nearing Point of Turning Around COVID-19 With High Vaccination Rate - Fauci

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is nearing the point of a turnaround in its battle with the novel coronavirus with its rapidly expanding vaccination rate, National Institute of

Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci said in a congressional hearing on Tuesday.

"I believe that we are about at that critical turning point when we get a certain percentage" of vaccinations versus cases," Fauci said. "We don't know exactly what it is but it (is) clearly the majority of individuals in the country getting vaccinated to see a sharp turning point ... in cases." The United States has administered 262 million doses of coronavirus vaccines so far, immunizing 116 million Americans or 35.2 percent of the population.

Fauci described Biden's goal of vaccinating 70 percent of adult Americans by July 4 as being "attainable." However, if the vaccination drive slowed and the virus was left to its own devices, it will continue to surge, he said.

"Based on experience, thus far in this country and globally. I feel confident that if we continue to vaccinate people at the rate that we're doing, we will very soon have a situation where we will have so few infections in this country that we will begin to return to the normalcy that all of us desire so much," Fauci added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - US Military, Estonia's Defense Forces Establish Estonian Liaison Officer - EUCOM

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The US military and the Estonian Defense Forces have signed a deal creating an Estonian liaison officer position aimed at helping coordinate planning between the two sides, United States European Command (USEUCOM) announced on Tuesday.

"US European Command (USEUCOM) and the Estonian Defense Forces will enjoy greater integration following a virtual signing ceremony today establishing an Estonian liaison officer on the USEUCOM headquarters staff," the command said in a press release. "Liaison officers serve an important role at the command and help synchronize planning efforts between USEUCOM and their home nations."

USEUCOM said the Estonian officer is expected to arrive this summer and join liaison officers from 11 other nations in the command's Multinational Coordination Cell.

The release noted that Estonia is currently hosting parts of the Fires Shock series of exercises, as well as portions of the multinational Swift Response 21, which are part of the DEFENDER-Europe 21 drills.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Administration Launches First Big Offshore Wind Energy Project - US Interior Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved construction of the first major offshore wind energy project in the United States off the coast of Nantucket in the state of Massachusetts, the US Department of the Interior announced on Tuesday.

"Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo today announced approval of the construction and operation of the Vineyard Wind project - the first large-scale, offshore wind project in the United States," the Interior Department said in a press release.

The 800-megawatt Vineyard Wind energy project will contribute to the Biden-Harris administration's goal of generating 30 gigawatts of energy from offshore wind by 2030 and will be located 12 nautical miles off Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. It will create 3,600 jobs and generate power for 400,000 homes and businesses, the release said.

The decision grants Vineyard Wind final federal approval to install 84 or fewer turbines off Massachusetts in an east-west orientation. The turbines will have a minimum spacing of 1 nautical mile between them in the north-south and east-west directions, the Interior Department said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Completes 6% to 12% of Afghanistan Withdrawal - Central Command

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The US military concluded between 6 percent and 12 percent of the withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghanistan as of Monday morning, the Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a weekly update published on Tuesday.

"Since the President's decision, the United States has retrograded the equivalent of approximately 104 C-17 loads of material out of Afghanistan and have turned over more than 1,800 pieces of equipment to the Defense Logistics Agency for destruction. Also, the United States has officially handed over one facility to the Afghan National Army," CENTCOM said in a press release.

CENTCOM estimated that between 6 percent and 12 percent of the entire retrograde process had been completed, the release said.

The command said it expects to provide weekly updates on the withdrawal, while cautioning that it will only provide estimates of ranges for operational security - gaps that will grow larger as the pullout proceeds.

President Joe Biden ordered all troops out of Afghanistan by September 11, 2021 - the 20th anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

The release made no mention of military personnel. However the withdrawal includes about 2,500 US service members and up to 7,500 soldiers from other nations, mainly NATO countries, according to media reports.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden to Announce Additional Measures to Boost COVID-19 Vaccinations in US - White House

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will announce later on Tuesday a range of additional measures to boost the vaccination effort in the United States, including free rides to vaccination sites from Uber and Lyft, the White House said in a release.

"The [US] President [Joe Biden] will highlight a new program from the ride-sharing companies Lyft and Uber, which will offer free rides to anyone going to a vaccination site to get vaccinated. As part of this historic commitment, Lyft and Uber will promote rides to and from tens of thousands of vaccination sites through their apps," the release said.

The free-ride program with Uber and Lyft will start in the next two weeks and continue until July 4, the release said.

Biden will also announce new partnerships between federal retail pharmacies and high-enrollment community colleges to provide on-site clinics for students, staff, and local communities, the release also said.

Last week, Biden set a goal to administer at least one coronavirus injection to 70 percent of American adults by July 4th.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Colonial Pipeline Cyberattack Perhaps 'Most Substantial' in US History - Senator

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The recent ransomware cyberattack on the Colonial Pipeline, one of the United States' largest fuel providers, may be one of the "most substantial" in the nation's history, US Senator Rob Portman said during a Tuesday hearing.

"This is potentially the most substantial and damaging attack on US critical infrastructure ever," Portman said.

The US government said the attack has been carried out by the DarkSide hacking group.

Colonial Pipeline said the cyberattack has halted operations and some systems have been taken offline in order to contain the threat to infrastructure.

US President Joe Biden said that his administration is closely following the situation and a number of agencies are working collaboratively to get the fuel provider back into full operation as well as to improve the prevention and response mechanisms to cyberattacks.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Governor of US State of Georgia Suspends Gas Taxes After Colonial Pipeline Attack – Order

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – Georgia Governor Brian Kemp on Tuesday signed an executive order that temporarily suspends gas taxes in the state to prevent a hike in fuel prices in the aftermath of the Colonial Pipeline cyberattack.

"Today Governor Brian P. Kemp signed an executive order to temporarily suspend gas in Georgia in light of the Colonial Pipeline cyber attack," the executive order said. "The order further prohibits price gauging by bad actors looking to exploit the situation."

The order also increases the weight limits for trucks transporting fuel to provide more supply for stations as they receive deliveries.

The governor said the measure would be temporary, since the Colonial Pipeline is expected to resume its operations later this week, the release accompanying the order said.

Colonial Pipeline said on Friday that it halted all pipeline operations and took some systems offline to contain the threat from the cyberattack. The pipeline runs the largest refined products pipeline system, transporting more than 100 million gallons of fuel daily from Houston in Texas to the New York Harbor.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Imposes Hezbollah-Related Sanctions on 7 Individuals in Lebanon - Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has targeted seven persons in Lebanon in its latest round of Hezbollah-related sanctions, the US Department of the Treasury announced in a statement on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated seven individuals in connection with Hizballah and its financial firm, Al-Qard al-Hassan (AQAH)," the statement said.

The sanctions target Ezzat Youssef Akar, Ibrahim Ali Daher, Abbas Hassan Gharib, Mustafa Habib Harb, Hasan Chehadeh Othman, Wahid Mahmud Subayti and Ahmad Mohamad Yazbeck, all from Lebanon, the Treasury said.

The Treasury Department explained that Hezbollah uses AQAH as a cover to manage its financial activities as well as to gain access to the international financial system.

"Ibrahim Ali Daher (Daher) serves as the Chief of Hezbollah's Central Finance Unit, which oversees Hizballah's overall budget and spending, including the group's funding of its terrorist operations and killing of the group's opponents," the release said. "The other six individuals designated today used the cover of personal accounts at certain Lebanese banks, including US-designated Jammal Trust Bank (JTB), to evade sanctions targeting AQAH and transfer approximately half a billion US dollars on behalf of AQAH."

Hezbollah has been designated as a terrorist organization by more than 20 countries, including the United States, Israel, Canada and the United Kingdom. The European Union has designated Hezbollah's military wing a terrorist organization.

Russia does not consider Hezbollah to be a terror group.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Global Crackdown by Police From 31 Nations Seizes 56,400 Cultural Goods - Interpol

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - A five month crackdown by law enforcement of 31 nations resulted in the seizure of 56,400 items of cultural value and 67 arrests, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) said on Tuesday.

"These include archaeological objects, furniture, coins, paintings, musical instruments and sculptures," an INTERPOL press release said.

During the operational phase from June 1 to October 31 in 2020 law enforcement conducted tens of thousands of inspections at airports, ports, border crossings, auction houses, museums and private residences, the release said.

As a result, more than 300 investigations were opened, and 67 individuals arrested. The operation was the most successful to date, with more than 56,400 cultural goods seized, the release added.

The operation, with law enforcement from 31 nations participating, was led by the Spanish Civil Guard. International coordination was supported by Europol, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Imposes Hezbollah-Related Sanctions on 7 Individuals in Lebanon - Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has targeted seven persons in Lebanon in its latest round of Hezbollah-related sanctions, the Treasury announced on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated seven individuals in connection with Hizballah and its financial firm, Al-Qard al-Hassan (AQAH)," the Treasury said in a statement.

The sanctions target Ezzat Youssef Akar, Ibrahim Ali Daher, Abbas Hassan Gharib, Mustafa Habib Harb, Hasan Chehadeh Othman, Wahid Mahmud Subayti and Ahmad Mohamad Yazbeck, all from Lebanon, the Treasury said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Poll Ties Pandemic to Record US Consumer Expectations of Continued Home Price Increases

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - A booming US housing market, fueled in part by thousands of dollars in COVID-19 relief payments to American households, pushed consumer expectations of future home price increases to record levels, according to a Gallup poll on Tuesday.

"[Efforts] to contain damage to the economy from the coronavirus, came at a time when the supply of available houses could not keep up with demand. Additionally, many people forced into remote work and schooling by COVID-19 health restrictions were looking for new houses to accommodate those lifestyle changes," a press release explaining the poll said.

As a result, US consumer expectations of a continuing rise in home values hit 71 percent in April, the highest level reported in a Gallup polling series going back to 2005, the release said.

The previous record of 70 percent came during the US housing bubble in 2005 that later collapsed, triggering the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the release added.

Gallup said it usually finds that Americans regard real estate as the best long-term investment among several options seeing it as superior to stocks, gold, savings accounts and bonds.

The 41 percent choosing real estate as the best investment in the latest poll is the highest top selection for any of the five investment options in a polling series going back 11 years, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Ready to Send COVID-19 Vaccines to North Korea – Reports

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – The United States is ready to share COVID-19 vaccines with North Korea and provide Pyongyang other assistance in combatting the coronavirus, CNN reported on Tuesday, citing two sources familiar with the matter.

The Biden administration thinks North Korea will not be ready to engage with the United States on important international issues until the threat of pandemic has passed, the sources said.

The US should accompany this assistance with effective monitoring to ensure that vaccines reach those who are most in need, one of the officials said. However, there are no immediate plans to share such support, the official added.

In late April, the US COVID-19 response team senior adviser Andrew Slavitt confirmed that Washington is looking at options to share about 60 million AstraZeneca doses with other countries over the next two months, with 10 million doses to be distributed globally right after the Food and Drug Administration grants authorization vaccine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Issues Emergency Fuel Waiver for Areas Hit By Colonial Pipeline Shutdown - EPA

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has issued an emergency fuel waiver to help eliminate shortages in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia in the

wake of the attack on the Colonial Pipeline, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said in a letter addressed to local officials on Tuesday.

"By this letter the US Environmental Protection Agency is issuing a waiver under the Clean Air Act (CAA) to address the fuel supply emergency caused by a cyberattack on Colonial Pipeline's computer networks that led to the Pipeline's shutdown," the letter said. "This pipeline shutdown and related impacts on petroleum pipeline operations affect the petroleum distribution system in your affected States and the District of Columbia."

The waiver is effective immediately and will continue through May 18, the EPA said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Military, Estonia's Defense Forces Establish Estonian Liaison Officer - EUCOM

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The US military and the Estonian Defense Forces have signed a deal creating an Estonian liaison officer position aimed at helping coordinate planning between the two sides, United States European Command (USEUCOM) announced on Tuesday.

"US European Command (USEUCOM) and the Estonian Defense Forces will enjoy greater integration following a virtual signing ceremony today establishing an Estonian liaison officer on the USEUCOM headquarters staff," the command said in a press release. "Liaison officers serve an important role at the command and help synchronize planning efforts between USEUCOM and their home nations."

USEUCOM said the Estonian officer is expected to arrive this summer and join liaison officers from 11 other nations in the command's Multinational Coordination Cell.

The release noted that Estonia is currently hosting parts of the Fires Shock series of exercises, as well as portions of the multinational Swift Response 21, which are part of the DEFENDER-Europe 21 drills.